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Letter dated 2 August 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, and with reference to the previous complaints submitted by the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations concerning the arbitrary practices regularly carried out against Lebanon and its people by Israel, I have the honour to inform you that the Israeli occupying forces and their client militia have been holding the people and village of Ayta under siege since 15 July 1999. No movement is permitted in either direction, even in cases of severe illness.

The Israeli forces break into the houses and damage their contents, lay waste to agricultural crops, and terrorize the people, most of whom are children, women and elderly persons, and subject them to interrogation. The occupation forces have also detained and thrown into prison scores of young male villagers and women, many of whom are less than 14 years old.

Those known to have been detained by the Israeli occupation forces and taken to Khiam detention centre include the following:

1. Ali Khalil Surur (20 years old). University student.

2. Samih Surur (23 years old). Assistant Director, police.

3. Hassan Musa Rada (15 years old). Student.

4. Muhammad Musa Rada (25 years old). Worker.

5. Muhammad Ni'mah Rada (15 years old).

Israel is detaining three other villagers from Ayta, namely, Nehme Houssein Daqduq, held since 1992, Mohammed Ahmad Hariss, held since 1997, and Muhammad al-Sayyid Muhammad, held since 1998.

The occupying forces and their collaborators have violated the security of scores of peaceful dwellings and damaged their contents; they have opened fire inside houses and terrorized children, women and elderly persons. Numerous enemy bulldozers patrol the streets and alleyways of the village, threatening to demolish houses, with a view to creating a state of panic and confusion in the village.

The siege of the people and village of Ayta and other occupied villages, the forced expulsion of the civilian population and the holding of young children hostage in Khiam detention centre all constitute flagrant violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Such practices are considered to be war crimes and in serious violation of international humanitarian law. Urgent measures must be taken to relieve this village, which has been under siege for three weeks.

In drawing your attention to these continued arbitrary Israeli practices against Lebanon and its people, I request you to intervene decisively with a view to lifting the siege from the village and people of Ayta and from other besieged villages, such as Bint Jubayl, and to securing the release of all those citizens who are being held hostage.

I further trust that you will make every possible endeavour to halt these Israeli practices and prevent any repetition thereof. This can best be achieved by the complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from occupied Lebanese territory, pursuant to Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 40 and 155, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Selim TADMOURY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative